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**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**



**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR  
CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND ELDERS**

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TESTIMONY OF  
**BRENDA DONALD WALKER**  
DEPUTY MAYOR

**OVERSIGHT HEARING**

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES  
ADRIAN FENTY, CHAIRPERSON

MARCH 6, 2006

Council Chambers  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20004  
3:00 P.M.

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Good afternoon Chairperson Fenty, members of the Committee on Human Services, and members of the public. My name is Brenda Donald Walker, the Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families and Elders. I am pleased to appear before you today on behalf of Mayor Anthony A. Williams at this public oversight hearing on the FY2006 performance of my office. While my cluster is comprised of the Departments of Health, Human Services, Mental Health, Parks and Recreation, Youth Rehabilitative Services, the Child and Family Services Agency, the Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Administration, the Office on Aging and D.C. Public Libraries– my primary testimony today will focus on the cross-cutting initiatives directly under my office and responsibility. I will conclude my testimony with comments on the Integrated Funding and Services for At-Risk Children, Youth, and Families Act.

My office was established by Mayor Williams in December 1999 to coordinate and facilitate greater interagency collaboration among the District's health and human services agencies that provide cradle to grave services for about half of the city's most vulnerable residents. This vantage point enables me to identify the cross-cutting issues, facilitate service integration and enable collaborative problem solving. Despite our occasional, deep-level involvement in specific agency issues as needed (such as MRDDA), we are not an operational office. During my four months in office, we have mostly focused on improving collaboration across our cluster and the city.

Today, I would like to highlight three of the significant initiatives being coordinated out of my office. These are the Human Capital component of the New Communities initiative, the City-Wide Youth Development Strategy, and the

Mayor's 10-year plan to end homelessness, also known as Homeless No More. I have and will continue to testify in detail about each of these initiatives at other Council hearings, so today I will just give brief highlights.

### New Communities – Human Capital

The New Communities approach reflects our vision for the human capital elements of all future development in the District. We know that sustainable development and *redevelopment* requires far more than investing in bricks and mortar. It requires investing in the people who comprise the community. To that end, my office is responsible for the development and implementation of the human capital strategy for the New Communities initiative.

Based on our experience in NW1, we have established a planning process to develop the human capital plan for the new Lincoln Heights and Barry Farm New Communities that involves:

1. Capturing the community's vision;
2. Conducting a community driven capacity and needs assessment;
3. Refining, finalizing and developing a resource plan that is specific to each site;  
and
4. Implementing the resource development and leverage plan.

We are in the implementation phase at NW1. This includes household assessments to guide individualized, self-sufficiency plans for low-income families; the delivery of necessary programs and services; and capacity-building investments in the community services network. In addition, as we are doing in NW1, we will work hand-in-hand with our colleagues on the economic development side to ensure that any New Community facilities developed (schools, libraries,

recreational centers, health clinics) are designed in a manner that supports the priorities of the human capital plan. We expect to have finalized plans in both new sites by the fall.

### Youth Development

In partnership with the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice, the DC Public Schools Superintendent and the Children's Youth Investment Trust, we have spearheaded a city-wide youth development strategy over the past year. The strategy adopts a two-tiered approach involving short-term violence reduction initiatives and broader system reform efforts. The *Safety First!* Initiatives reflect immediate investments in reducing youth violence in the city, including:

- The expansion of the successful gang intervention partnership in NW to communities East of the River via the *Violence Intervention Partnership*;
- The provision of intensive monitoring and wraparound services to 50 young people identified as the highest risk of being either homicide victims or perpetrators through the *Partnership for Success*, a multi-agency collaboration;
- The provision of wraparound social services to youth and their families at the early stages of juvenile delinquency through the *Second Responder Program*;
- The expansion of the *Truancy Diversion Program* to middle schools;
- The establishment of a pilot project called *Rebuilding the Village* in your ward, Chairman Fenty, to engage residents in the lives of disconnected young people in Petworth; and
- The expansion of the *School Based Mental Health Program*.

The second tier of the strategy focuses on longer-term system building, designed to improve the quality, effectiveness and accountability of youth services and programs. These systemic reforms address key issues such as:

- Common outcomes and performance measures for youth development;
- Program standards for city-funded youth programs; and
- Youth development training for people who work with youth.

The Children's Budget, mandated by the City Council in last year's Budget Support Act, is an important piece of this puzzle. It will be a useful instrument to more clearly detail our investments in young people in a way that can be aligned with intended outcomes.

#### The Homeless No More Plan

As you know from my testimony in January, our office oversees the *Homeless No More* comprehensive plan. We have been very busy since the plan's release in January 2004:

- Playing an active role in establishing the *Interagency Council on Homelessness* and staffing the Council once it is up and running; [*currently we are working very closely with the Office of Boards and Commissions to get the appointees finalized in short order*]
- Bringing on-line or completing 493 of our FY2006 new housing goal of 600 units; and
- Working with the *Housing Production Trust Fund* to identify projects for funding in FY2007 and FY2008.

In addition, we have improved shelter conditions and initiated the process to blend social services delivery, thereby transforming shelters into Homelessness

Assistance Centers. Although the process of seamlessly coordinating services has moved at a slower pace than I had hoped, we have made significant improvements, including:

- Renovating the 2nd floor of the Federal City Shelter to house the 120-bed Open Door Women's Shelter and demolishing the trailers that previously housed Open Door;
- Acquiring 1355-57 New York Avenue, NE, and renovating it into a 360-bed HAC for men to include a health clinic and services delivered by APRA, DOES and DHS;
- Renovating 801 East Building on St. Elizabeth's campus into a 360+ bed HAC, as well as a 48-bed transitional rehabilitation program;
- Renovating the John Young Center to house 100 women in lower NW;
- Renovating the DC General Hospital cafeteria to create a 100-bed women's facility that includes a laundry, cafeteria and lockers;
- Renovating a ward at DC General to create a hypothermia shelter for families; and
- Reclaiming an additional cottage at DC Village to expand capacity.

On top of these interagency initiatives, several, small but critical, interagency-focused offices are housed under the deputy mayor. These include the Office of Medicaid Operations Reform, the Office of Healthcare Privacy, and the Office on Re-Entry Services.

#### The Office of Medicaid Operations Reform (OMOR)

OMOR was established to oversee and coordinate reform activities among District agencies that function as providers of Medicaid eligible services. OMOR's achievements this year include:

- Overseeing the allocation of Medicaid reform funds among agencies for operational improvements including implementing effective billing operations; and
- Working with agency staff and contractors to facilitate the completion of outstanding audits and cost reports, resulting in more current federal reporting and additional revenue to District agencies -- for example, CFSA was able to claim an additional \$26 million in one-time Medicaid revenue due to the agency.

#### Office of Healthcare Privacy and Confidentiality (OHPC)

In response to the federal HIPAA mandate and to facilitate data sharing, we established this office to provide coordination, serve as a single informational resource and oversee compliance. Through effective interagency coordination, we have improved data protection and sharing, including:

- Completing two of the seven HIPAA compliance milestones;
- Completing phase I of the third milestone -- Security -- and preparing take the final steps to bring us into federal compliance; and
- Resolving the District's only privacy rule complaint/lawsuit without financial penalty.

#### The Offender Re-Entry Initiative

In 2004, the District received a grant for just over \$2 million from the U.S. Department of Justice to fund a *Serious and Violent Offender Re-Entry Program*. The District's Re-Entry Initiative is a multi-faceted collaboration between federal and District agencies and a network of community and faith-based providers. The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council serves as the lead project facilitator. To date, the Center has served more than 250 re-entrants with federal grant support

and more than 600 clients with local funding. We anticipate that the project will serve 600 clients in 2006.

Integrated Funding and Services for At-Risk Children, Youth, and Families Act

I will now turn to the Integrated Funding and Services for At-Risk Children, Youth, and Families Act introduced by you, Councilmember Fenty, and Councilmember Patterson.

While we support and agree with the overarching goals and principals of the legislation, we do have some concerns about the scope of some of the definitions in the bill. In addition, because we are still in budget negotiations, the ability of the agencies affected by the bill to contribute to the fund is unclear at this time. Only a relatively small proportion of our cluster agencies' local funding is not required to leverage federal matches, maintain local efforts and provide legally mandated services. We currently are working to determine the precise amount of such "available" funding.

We do agree that the fund presents an opportunity to provide additional interagency services with increased flexibility. It is consistent with our overall direction and cross-cluster initiatives. In fact, the bill has already inspired additional interagency discussion and collaboration in thinking about how this fund could be used to better serve our at-risk children and families. Three potential uses for the fund are:

1. Targeted prevention services to keep youth and their families out of the public systems;



2. Intensive wrap-around services to children/youth returning home from foster care, residential placements, or from detention facilities; and
3. Individualized services for young people who are being treated/served in out-of-home placements to reduce the risk of “bouncing out” of placements.

We have discussed several possible methods to administer the fund, including housing the fund in the Children Youth Investment Trust, granting out the administration through a competitive process, or managing it out of my office. This discussion has been most recently informed by our positive experience with the transformation of the DC CINGS federal grant into a system of care governed by the Interagency Collaborative Team. The system of care approach requires administrative infrastructure that is flexible and responsive to individual client needs to support specialized planning. As part of the CINGS transition effort, we will be administering a small pool of flexible dollars (in the range of \$250,000), that will allow us to pilot the administration of a flexible funding pool. We believe this experience will inform our recommendations on how to implement this bill.

We certainly applaud your foresight and initiative in bringing this bill to the table. I am happy to make myself available to you and your staff as the language is honed. Thank you for inviting me here to testify before you today about the work done by my office and the proposed legislation. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.